



Timely Information for Personal Success

Social Ties Affect Weight & Mood

New research indicates that social interactions have a ripple effect that extends far beyond household and family units. Two of every three Americans are overweight or obese. There are many explanations for our expanding waistlines, starting with lack of exercise and excessively large portions of calorie-dense prepared and processed foods. *But an interesting study suggests that social interactions may also play a role.*

Weight

Researchers from Harvard and the University of California investigated 12,067 people who had been evaluated medically on multiple occasions from 1971 to 2003 as part of the Framingham Heart Study. They found that if one sibling became obese during the study, the chance that another sibling would become obese increased by 40%.

Genetics might account for some of the parallel weight gain in siblings, but not for the fact that if a spouse became obese, the likelihood that the other spouse would follow suit jumped by 37%. That's no surprise, since spouses share meals and may have similar exercise habit – but scientists also found that if a person *had a friend* who became obese, his chance of growing obese rose by 57%.

Scientists suspect a major factor is that a social network influences what its members perceive as normal and acceptable. If a man sees his friends become obese over time, he may accept weight gain as natural, even inevitable.

Mood

Studies also confirmed many earlier findings about the factors that determine a person's happiness. But it added an unexpected finding: *happiness can also spread more diversely and broadly across social networks.* The scientists found that if one spouse became happy, the likelihood that the other spouse would become happy increased by 8%. Siblings who became happy increased the other sibling's chance of becoming happy by 14%.

If doctors learn to harness the benefits of natural social networks to spread healthful habits, positive attitudes, and wise lifestyle choices through communities, they may be able to improve public health. This new area of research is worthy of further study, so for now, call it a network in progress. ■

Source: Harvard Health Publications (www.health.harvard.edu).

Feedback Tips

Poorly conducted performance reviews, harsh criticisms by thoughtless colleagues, and other bad experiences contribute to employees' temptations to steer clear of feedback if they can help it. But feedback is how we learn. Without feedback and reflection, it's not possible to know how one is truly doing at work. Asking for *positive* feedback can benefit employees in the following ways:

❖ Identifying strengths.

Feedback helps maximize natural strengths and reach one's full potential. This is a good idea any-

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Healthy Recipe: Chile Con Queso

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup light-colored beer
- 1-1/2 cups low-fat milk
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1-3/4 cups sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 10-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4 cup sliced scallions

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 84
- Carbohydrates: 5 g.
- Protein: 4 g.
- Sodium: 307 mg.
- Fat: 5 g.
- Saturated fat: 3 g.
- Fiber: 0 g.



DIRECTIONS:

- ➊ Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until soft and beginning to brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Add beer and cook until reduced slightly, about 1 minute. Add 1 cup milk and bring to a simmer.
- ➋ Meanwhile, whisk the remaining 1/2 cup milk and cornstarch in a small bowl. Add to the pan and cook, stirring vigorously, until bubbling and thickened, 1 to 2 minutes.
- ➌ Reduce heat to low, add cheese and cook, stirring, until melted. Stir in drained tomatoes, lime juice, and chili powder. Serve warm, garnished with scallions.

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Questions and Answers

Managing Your Day

Q: *With budget cutbacks, it seems everyone where I work is asked to do more and more all the time. Is there anything we can do to be less stressed and frustrated?*

A: It's true you may not be able to control what's being thrown at you or asked of you, but there *are* ways to effectively manage your workday. First, you must admit and acknowledge three truths: 1) **You will never get it all done.** Even if you work 24/7, there will still be unfinished business; things to do, people to see, reports to prepare, and emails and publications to read.

2) **Your day will not always go the way you planned.** That's ok. Your success at the end of the day should not be based upon whether the schedule you set was followed, but on how productive you were leading to end goals. You will have to continually reprioritize to adjust to changing situations.

3) **Everything takes longer than you think it will.** That's ok, too! Do the absolute best job you can; even if it means you can't get to everything else on your plate. Winners are not the ones who get it all done. Winners are those who get the most out of everything they do and make the biggest difference. ■

Source: Michael Guld, author, speaker, and entrepreneur.

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time, but when an employee is secure in his/her skills and competence, this person will want to truly excel.

❖ **Seeing into blind spots.** This is particularly important for someone who has been newly promoted or in the throes of a new endeavor.

❖ **Meeting goals.** Feedback gives specific direction on how to meet goals. This approach works best when the employee is clear on what the goals are. This person doesn't need information about what to do, but rather *how to do it*.

❖ **Preparing for advancement.** This method is best when specifically seeking advice and *direction*, as opposed to self-awareness.

❖ **Becoming more effective.** Feedback can help anyone become more effective in a current job, which is helpful at any time. Feedback can even provide a sense of what clients want and need. Employees who ask questions not just about themselves, but also about clients and customers, can better serve their needs and therefore increase their value to them. ■

Source: Joelle K. Jay, PhD. For more information, visit <http://joellekjay.com>.